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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 FEA-01 IO-13 CU-02 SY-05
MCT-01 NEA-10 /116 W
----------112107Z 013447 /63
P R 111930Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9842
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL CALI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 01372

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ECON, PFOR
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

M SUMMARY. A NASTY PUBLIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS MAY FURTHER CLARIFY THE BATTLE LINES WITHIN THE FACTION-RIDDEN LIBERAL PARTY AND WILL PROBABLY SERVE TO ENRICH THE COLUMBIA,-NTHOLOGY OF POLITICAL INVECTIVE AND SARCASM. EX-AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. JULIO CESAR TURBAY'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY NOMINATION SEEMED TO HAVE DEVELOPED GREATER MOMENTUM THAT, THAT OF HIS ADVERSARY, CARLOS LLERAS. URBAN AND RURAL TERRORISM REMAINED AT A NORMAL LEVEL. THE FINANCE MINISTER RAISED BUSINESS MORALE IN MEDELLIN. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CONTINUED TO DEMONSTRATE AN INDEPENDENT GOC LINE ON SOME MULTILATERAL MATTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. DOGS AND CATS. . . S BARBED EXCHANGE BETWEEN PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS, BOTH LIBERALS, SHED
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CONSIDERABLE HEAT, IF LITTLE ILLUMINATION, ON THE POLITICAL SCENE. TAKING PERSONAL UMBRAE AT REMARKS BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ IN A SPEECH ON JANUARY 9, IN WHICH LOPEZ REFERRED TO "DOGS BARKING AT THE GOVERNMENT" AND QUOTED THE RPOVERB "EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY BUT THE NIGHTS BELONG TO THE CAT", LLERAS REPLIED WITH A SARCASTICALLY CUTTING ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT IN A LONG ARTICLE IN HIQ WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA OF

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FEBRUARY 9, WHICH WAS REPRINTED IN ITS ENTIRETY IN THE LEADING DAILIES. LLERAS CHIDED LOPEZ FOR USING UNDIGNIFIED IMMODERATE LANGUAGE; DEFENDED THE DOGAS A NOBLER ANIMAL THAN THE CAT, TO WHICH HE LIKENED LOPEZ, AND DENIED THATTIMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF LOPEZ' ECONOMIC POLICY ARE AS ORIGINAL AS LOPEZ CLAIMS. LLERAS WONDERED IF "THE NIGHTS BELONG TO THE CAT", DID NOT CONTAIN A VEILED THREAT AND STATED THAT "THE CAT" HAD ALREADY BEEN AT WORK DURING THE APRIL 1976 MID-TERM ELECTION AND IN THE RECENT WAVE OF ADHERENCES TOTHE TURBAY CAUSE. LOPEZ REPLIED IN A SPEECH ON FEBRUARY 10. HE RECALLED THAT LLERAS, WHEN PRESIDENT, HAD BEEN ADMONISHED BY THE PROCURATOR GENERALFOR USING INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE DURING THE 1970 ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND STATED HE NEEDED NO LESSONS IN "DIGNITY"FROM SUCH A PERSON.

3. COMMENT:T OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE LLERAS ATTACK PROBABLY REPRESENTS THE BEGINNING OF A POSITION OF DIRECT OPPOSITION AND CRIPTISM OF THELOPEZ ADMINISTRATION BY LLERAS RATHER THAN AN ISOLATEDD EMOTIONAL OUTBURST. LLERAS MAY WELL FEEL THATTHE HAS NOTHING TO GAIN BY CONTINUING HIS LOW PROFILE POSTURE VIS-A-VIS LOPEZ WHO, IF HE HAS NOT ACTIVERLY HELPED TURBAY, HAS PROBABLY MOVED CAUTIOUSLY TO FRUSTRATE LLERAS' AMBITIONS. FURTHERMORE, THERE UNDOUBTEDLY EXSISTS A RESERVOIR OF LIBERAL SENTIMENT WHICH IS DESENCHANTED WITH LOPEZ AND WHICH, BR FRANK OPPOSITION TO LOPEZ, LLERAS MAY HOPE TO CAPTURE.

4. . . . AND SNOWBALLS. THE BATTLE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION CONTINUED CONFIDENTIAL

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DURING THE WEEK AS BOTH OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES, JULIO CESAR TURBAY AND CARLOS LLERAS, GAINED PUBLIC COMMITMENTS FROM VARIOUS NATIONAL AND LOCAL GROUPS. TURBWY'S EFFORT APPEAR TO HAVE GAINED A SNOWBALLING EFFECT AS MORE NATIONAL POLITICAL AND LABOR GROUPS PLEDGED THEIR SUPPORT TO HIS CANDIDACY. THE LATEST SUCH SUCCESS WAS THE DECISION FEB 10 OF THE CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAM WORKERS (CTC) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO OPENLY SUPPORT AND WORK FOR TURBAY'S ELECTION. ALTHOUGH LLERAS' CAMPAIGN APPEARS STALLED BY COMPARISON, A NUMBER OF POLITICAL ENTITIES HAVE DECLARED THEIR SUPPORT OF HIS CANDIDACY. ALTHOUGH TURBAY SEEMS TO LEAD LLERAS AT THE MOMENT, THE NOMINATING CONVENTION IS STILL A YEAR OFF AND TURBAY'S SNOWBALL COULD WELL LOSE ITS MOMENTUM.

5. POLITICAL VIOLENCE CONTINUES AT USUSAL LEVEL. IN BOGOTA, A POWERFUL BOMB CAUSED CONSIDERABLE MATERIAL DAMAGE ON FEBRUARY 7 TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF ECOPETROL, THE COLOMBIAN PETROLEUM ENTERPRISE LOCATED ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE EMBASSY. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LATEST BOMBING HAVE

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NOT YET BEEN IDENTIFIED. ALSO THIS WEEK, THE NATIONAL UNIVERISTY (UN) REOPENED FOR CLASSES ON 7 FEBRUARY WITHOUT INCIDENT; HOWEVER, SEVERAL UN STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED AS A RESULT OF A VIOLENT DEMONSTRATION ON 9 FEBRUARY AT A HOSPITAL SERVED BY MEMBERS OF THE UN MEDICAL SCHOOL. DURING A NORMAL WEEK OF SCATTERED VIOLENCE IN RURAL COLOMBIA, TWO SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED AND TWO FARC GUERILLAS KILLED IN A CLASH ON 5 FEBRUARY AND THREE MORE FARC GUERRRILLAS AND AN ELN ACTIVIST CAPTURED IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS ON 7 FEBRUARY.

6. MINISTER OF FINANCE IMPROVES LOCAL BUSINESS CLIMATE. CONSULATE MEDELLIN REPORTS THAT ANTIOQUENO BUSINESSMEN WERE IN A EUPHORIC MOOD AFTER THE FINANCE MINISTER'S RECENT THREE-DAY VISIT THERE. DURING HIS VISIT ESPINOSA MET WITH MOST OF THE KEY PRIVATE SECTOR GROUPS AND BUSINESS LEADERS. THE MOOD IN MEDELLIN , WHICH HAS BEEN PESSIMISTIC EVEN THOUGH THE ECONOMY IS RECOVERING STRONGLY,
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APPARENTLY TOOK A SWING TO THE OTHER EXTREME IN SPITE OF RECENT STRONG MONETARY MEASURES AND THE THREAT OF GROWING INFLATION.

7. MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS. THE EMBASSY RAISED SEVERAL MULTILATERAL ISSUES WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WITH, AT BEST, MIXED RESULTS. PRELIMINARY CONTACTS REVEALED THAT, ON THE ILO GOVERNING BODY, THE FONOFF WAS SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE (BOGOTA 1327); ON THE UN SPECIAL SESSION OF DISARMAMENT, THE FONOFF FAVORED ALMOST ANY DISARMAMENT INITATIVE, AND ON NPT, THE FONOFF WAS NOT INCLINED TO PRESS FOR RATIFICATION BY THE CONGRESS (BOGOTA 1362). WE INTEND TO FOLLOW UP ON THESE ISSUES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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